UNITED
NATIONS

CCPR

International covenant
on civil and
political rights

Distr.
GENERAL

CCPR/C/79/Add.98
November 1998

Original: ENGLISH

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
Sixty-fourth session

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES
PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 40 OF THE COVENANT

Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee

Iceland

1. The Committee considered the third periodic report of Iceland (CCPR/C/94/Add.2) at its 1704th and 1705th meetings, held on 21 October 1998 (CCPR/C/SR.1704-1705), and adopted the following concluding observations at its 1717th meeting, held on 29 October 1998.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the timely and comprehensive report submitted by the Government of Iceland. The Committee also expresses its appreciation for the provision, by the Icelandic delegation of further information about developments in the implementation of human rights in Iceland subsequent to the submission of the report. The written information submitted by the delegation in reply to the Committee's list of issues was particularly useful. The Committee also expresses its appreciation for the constructive and open dialogue it had with the Icelandic delegation.

B. Positive factors

3. The Committee commends the State party for its excellent record in the implementation of the provisions of the Covenant. It notes with appreciation that the second periodic report of Iceland as well as the Committee's concluding observations thereon were widely disseminated and were the object of public debate, which contributed to recent constitutional and legislative changes in the field of human rights.

4. The Committee welcomes the fact that Iceland has withdrawn its reservation to articles 8, paragraph 3 (a), and 13 of the Covenant.

5. The Committee expresses satisfaction at the adoption of Constitutional Act No. 97/1995 amending the human rights provisions of the Constitution, which now reflects to a greater extent the provisions of various international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Committee also expresses its satisfaction that the constitutional amendments give strength to the principle of the indivisibility of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

6. The Committee takes note of the intense legislative activity in matters covered by the Covenant that has taken place in Iceland since the examination of the second periodic report. It expresses its appreciation that the newly adopted laws contribute to better protection of fundamental rights in the State party. Of particular interest in this respect are the adoption of Act No. 62/1994 incorporating the Convention on Human Rights, the Act on the Judiciary (No. 15/1998), and the amendments to the Foreign Nationals Supervision Act (No. 45/1965), the Personal Names Act (No. 45/1996) and the Act on Administrative Procedures (73/1993).

7. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children (Act No. 83/1994) and of the Human Rights Centre in 1994.

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

8. While noting that the the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms has been incorporated into Icelandic law, the Committee emphasizes that a number of articles of the Covenant, including articles 3, 4, 12, 22, 24, 25, 26 and 27, go beyond the provisions of the European Convention. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ensure that all rights protected under the Covenant are given effect in Icelandic law.

9. The Committee recommends that the remaining reservations to the Covenant be reconsidered with a view to their eventual withdrawal.

10. The Committee notes with concern the persistence of certain areas of inequality between men and women in Iceland, despite the efforts of the Government. It recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to achieve full equality between men and women, including in the employment sector. It hopes that the "job evaluation" exercise undertaken under the Ministry of Social Affairs will contribute to eliminating discrimination in the workplace and to implementing fully the principle of equal wage for work of equal value. The Committee asks that the next periodic report provide further information on measures taken to combat all forms of violence against women.

11. The Committee reiterates its concern over the persistence of discrimination in law and practice against children born out of wedlock, which is incompatible with articles 24 and 26 of the Covenant. It recommends that attention be paid to the prompt rectification of this situation with regard to all rights to which children are entitled.

13. The Committee requests the State party to ensure the publication and wide dissemination in Iceland of the State party's report as well as of the Committee's concluding observations.

14. The Committee fixes the date for the submission of Iceland's fourth periodic report to be October 2003.